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ABSTRACT

This study explored student perspectives on their work and play at school and examined why they engage in work and play. Nineteen eighth grade students, who were predominantly white, and of the middle or upper middle class, were the subjects. The students were asked to conduct an interviewer on a grand tour and then various mini-tours of their activities during a school day. They also were asked to categorize different activities as either work or play. This was done to help them articulate their precise thoughts and feelings about the nature of work and play. Work activities were commonly perceived by the students as things they had to do whether they wanted to or not, and among the reasons they did them was because the teacher graded them. Play activities were seen as things the students did because they wanted to and because they were fun. The findings suggested that students see their school activities in terms of work or play. A discussion is presented on the importance of developing instructional activities and curricula to increase their play-like qualities and to provide higher motivation for students. (JD)

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Final Report

NIE G 80-0070

Some Neglected Parameters of the Student Role in Teaching

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ABSTRACT

This research explores a student "perspective" on school play and school work. Rather than concentrating on what students actually do as they play and work, the research focuses on why they do them. That is, it focuses on the context of their behavior rather than its text. Moreover, the research is concerned with only one aspect of these play and work contexts, namely, their defining socio-perceptual parameters. While this approach is broader than some contextual researchers might find useful and narrower than others might desire, it is still one legitimate way to view the impact of context on the text of human behavior. Moreover, it is an approach that lies at the cutting edge of current thinking about play and work in other disciplines.

To explore these parameters, an availability sample of 19 white, sex-mixed, middle-class, Santa Barbara eighth graders was interviewed using a specially designed "observant participant" methodology. One part of the methodology was designed to tap whether school play and/or school work were salient natural perceptual features of student life. The other part was designed to help students articulate their precise thoughts and feelings about the nature of their school play and school work.

Interview results indicated that school play and school work were salient natural features of student life. Moreover, they were preceived in very opposite ways. The former activities were perceived as ones students had to do, even though they did not want to, because they were graded. Whereas, the latter activities were perceived as ones students did not have to do, but they wanted to do, because they were fun. In short, school work activities were perceived as being largely "exotelic," whereas school play activities were perceived as being largely "autotelic."

These results suggested that current efforts to make school work more work-like are off-target. Such efforts would appear to send clear messages to students about their self-social incompetence rather than competence. Efforts to make school work more play-like are required. But such efforts will ensue only when instructional specialists change their beliefs about students as workers and players.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Acknowledgements	i
Abstract	ii
School Play and School Work	1
Studying PLAY and WORK	3
Applying the "Perspective" Perspective	6
Findings	10
Some Limitations	36
Review and Discussion	38
References	48

School Play and School Work

This report pivots on an assumption that certain beliefs about students play a central role in the operation of most American public schools (c.f. Foshay, 1973). Hence, when that operation becomes problematic--as decreasing test scores (see Madaus et al., 1980), increasing misbehavior (Rubel, 1977), deteriorating inter- and intra-group relations (Karweit et al., 1979), and increasing personal abuse (Wynne, 1980) would suggest is the case today--we propose that educators might reassess these beliefs.

Elsewhere, we have invited you to reassess your beliefs about students as psychological entities and especially as learners. We have suggested that virtually all students, rather than a few, can learn excellently, swiftly and self-confidently (Block, 1980); that is, individual differences in learners need not translate into individual differences in learning. Here we invite you to reconsider your beliefs about students as sociological entities and especially as workers and as players. We shall suggest that the school play of students tells us much about their school work, why they work so little, and how they might be motivated to work more.

At first glance, our focus on students, their play, and the play/work relationship may seem frivolous. Consider, though, the following points. For ease of exposition, we shall use the terms PLAY and WORK hereafter to refer to students' school play and school work, respectively.

First, there is growing recognition among schooling researchers that students are a key neglected variable in the instructional process (Weinstein, in press). Whereas traditional research paradigms usually gave teachers the central place in this process, the new paradigms often give students a central one (Doyle, 1980). Clearly, if the traditional paradigms justified the study of teachers, the new paradigms justify the study

of students.

Second, there is growing evidence that the student role in instruction has yet to be characterized adequately. While many scholars and practitioners alike seem to assume that the essence of the role involves doing WORK, (e.g., Anyon, 1980; Behn et al., 1974; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Larkin, 1979; LeCompte, 1978; Ogbu, 1978; Sieber, 1979; Wilcox, 1982), WORK would appear to be only a part of what they do. In fact, studies of how students distribute their school time and of the activities or tasks on which this time is spent (e.g., Allen, 1982; Batcher, 1981; Crowe, 1981; Cusick et al., 1976; Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1977; LeCompte, 1979; Everhart, 1977) often suggest that WORK is only a small part of what they do. Indeed, some public school students may spend the bulk of the typical school day negotiating to do little or no WORK at all (e.g., Doyle, 1980; Smith & Geoffrey, 1967)!

Third, there is preliminary evidence that one thing most students do, besides work, is PLAY. This evidence suggests, in fact, that a good deal of students' time, tasks, and activities are directed toward that dynamic state (e.g., Allen, 1982, Cusick, 1973; Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1978). Students, for example, constantly "test" the boundaries of teachers' lesson plans (Allen, 1982), "bug" the teacher about certain rules for behavior (Licata, 1979), "goof-off" with friends (Everhart, 1977; Parrott, 1972), and act "childish" (Glassner, 1976) or otherwise "non-serious" (DeVoss, 1978).

Fourth, there is also preliminary evidence that students' PLAY may be dialetically related to their school WORK. This evidence indicates, in particular, that PLAY may be so central to school life, that students will attempt to minimize the quantity and/or quality of their WORK so that they can maximize the quantity and quality of their PLAY (Allen, 1982; DeVoss,

1978). Usually, the nature of their WORK will be negotiated so that its substance and/or form parameters are as well-defined, as undemanding, and as efficiently executed as possible. This negotiation may take place through quasi-bi-lateral dialogues with (Allen, 1982; McNeil, 1980; Doyle, 1980) or through unilateral dictates to their teachers (Licata, 1979).

These four lines of research, then, suggest that our focus on students, their PLAY, and the PLAY-WORK relationship is far from frivolous. If students have a central but not yet adequately specified role in the instructional process, then more knowledge about that role would seem to be essential. And if PLAY may be just as central to that role as WORK and if students' PLAY and WORK are dialectically related, then more knowledge about students' PLAY and the PLAY/WORK relationship is particularly required.

Studying PLAY and WORK

How, then, does one go about studying students' PLAY and WORK? After all, even the most cursory literature review suggests that numerous methodologies exist for studying each topic not to mention the student "perspective" thereon. We proceeded as follows.

First, we perused the extant literature purporting to study K-12 public schools students' regular PLAY and/or WORK. (For an introduction to this literature see Baer, 1979; King, 1976; Henderson, 1980; O'Tocle, 1976; Schwartzman, 1976; Spindler, 1982; Spradley & McCordy, 1972; Wilcox, 1978). We excluded studies of "pre-school" classrooms primarily because most are private, and we excluded studies of "special" classrooms (e.g., individualized, special education, bilingual, ESL) because of the recent trend to "regularize" or "mainstream" them anyway.

This perusal suggested that the extant literature fell into three broad camps. One camp of studies was concerned primarily with what students

actually did while they engaged in PLAY and or WORK (e.g., Brophy & Evertson, 1981; Devoss, 1979; Gump, 1969), that is, with the text (Schwartzman, 1978) of their behavior. A second camp was concerned primarily with why students engaged in PLAY and/or WORK (e.g., Borman, in press; Bossert, 1979; Doyle, 1980; LeCompte, 1979; Polgar, 1976; Popkewitz, 1981), that is, with the context (Schwartzman, 1978) of their behavior. And the third camp was concerned with both (e.g., Erickson & Shultz, 1977; Green, 1980; Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz, 1979; McDermott, 1977; Mehan, 1978, 1980; Schwartzman, 1976).

Second, we decided to align our research with one of these camps, namely, the context camp. Our reasons were both substantive and methodological. Substantively speaking, the notion of "context" lies at the cutting edge of current research not only in instructional theory (e.g, Koehler, 1981) but PLAY and WORK theory as well (e.g., Cheska, 1981; Terkel, 1974). A synthesis of these theoretical lines seemed long overdue. For example, a recent vanguard volume on Play as Context (Cheska, 1981) contained no papers devoted to PLAY in public classrooms despite the enormous amounts of student time they consume (Bloom, 1976). And methodologically speaking, context research is rather rare especially compared to text research (Koehler, 1981; Schwartzman, 1978). Our small research project could, therefore, increase the knowledge base about schools as contexts for PLAY and WORK proportionately more than it could increase the knowledge base about schools as texts. At the same time, it could suggest insights for future school text by context interactional research by further clarifying the nature of the least developed interactant.

Third, we reviewed various approaches to the study of human (Moos, 1976) and more especially educational contexts (Brophy & Evertson, 1978; Erickson

& Shultz, 1977; Koehler, 1981; Moos, 1979) and settled on one for elaboration. Following the lead of Moos (1979) and Walberg (1979), we chose to pursue a "social climate" approach whose focus would be on identifying those shared perceptual parameters of the school experience which seemed to invite students to engage in PLAY and/or WORK. We recognized that such an approach was clearly broader than some instructional context reseachers might find useful and narrower than others might desire. For example, it clearly focused our attention on the characteristics of the perceptions rather than on the characteristics of the perceivers (Brophy & Evertson, 1978) or of their social actions (Erickson & Shultz, 1977). Still, the approach seemed useful. After all, we were interested in using a new approach to the study of schools as contexts for students' PLAY and WORK. To have focused on the background characteristics of the perceivers would have forced us to use old approaches that have been criticized by human and educational context reviewers alike (Moos, 1976; Koehler, 1981). Or to have focused on the actions of the perceivers would have forced us to study schools as texts (Scwartzman, 1978) for the students' PLAY and WORK.

Finally, having decided to study the context of students' PLAY and WORK from a "social climate" approach, we reviewed various approaches for studying the "student" perspective on the "social climate" of their schools. Most of these approaches could be characterized by who reported the basic data on the nature of the school climate and by what basic data were reported. Typically, the data were reported largely by either the students themselves (Pittman & Cloud, 1980) or by some other adult chronicler of classroom life (e.g., teacher [Holt, 1964], outside observer [Benham, 1980], or participant observer [Larkin, 1979]). And these data were those of interest to the student (Parrott, 1972) or those of interest to the

chronicler (Crowe, 1981). Since we were interested in a) whether PLAY and WORK were central facets of school life and b) what were their defining socio-perceptual parameters, clearly we required a student "perspective" methodology that would allow students to report for themselves what was salient to them. In short, we needed an "insider" research methodology despite some of the logistic problems it poses (Smetherham, 1978).

One such methodology particularly intrigued us, namely, the one used by Becker and his colleagues (Becker et al., 1961, 1968) in their studies of student life in medical schools. We were impressed by this methodology's concern with identifying the collective problems students actually face at school; we believed that PLAY and WORK were such problems. And we were also impressed by its concern with not only the collective actions students develop in response to these problems but their thoughts and feelings as well; we saw these thoughts and feelings as being central in explicating the defining socio-perceptual parameters of students' PLAY and WORK.

So we decided to use this methodology for our study and to give it a special name. We called it a "perspective" perspective.

Applying the "Perspective" Perspective

A "perspective" perspective researcher faces two fundamental problems in understanding the student perspective on their PLAY and WORK. One is how to identify the common problems students actually face at school. The other is how to get at students' collective intellectual and emotional reactions and proactions to these problems.

Typically, the researcher has resolved these problems through a two-pronged attack (e.g., Spradley, 1980). Usually, s/he will begin with some form of participant observation. To oversimplify, the researchers will emerse themselves part-time inside the human milieu of interest and record

what the collectivity experiences. Then, as the researcher begins to form some preliminary understandings as to how the milieu "ticks," s/he will shift to some form of observant participation to confirm, elaborate, or refine these understandings. To oversimplify again, s/he will seek out actual full-time inhabitants of the milieu--e.g., informants, spokespersons, acquaintances or friends--and encourage them to reflect upon and to articulate about certain aspects of their experience.

We have used both participant observer and especially observant participant techniques in applying the "perspective" perspective methodology to the study of students' perspectives on their PLAY and WORK. One of our graduate students, Robert Elmore, spent the entire 1978-79 academic year conducting first a participant observer and then an observant participant study of learning in two local sixth grade elementary public school classrooms. Then Elmore and another of our graduate students, Ann Thompson, spent a portion of the 1979-80 academic year using observant participant techniques to examine the impact of the transition from elementary to junior high school classrooms on these students' perspectives regarding school learning as well as home-school relationships (see, Elmore & Thompson, 1980).

Out of these studies, we drew the following conclusions. First, at both the elementary and the junior high school level, students spent much of their time engaged in some things they called WORK and in some things they called PLAY. Second, students typically alluded to the nature of their WORK and/or PLAY in connection with certain daily activities (cf. Morine-Dershimer & Tenenberg, 1981). Third, it was possible to elicit the essence of these activities using largely observant participant methods. Participant observer methods gave us only a finer-grained, not a different, picture of the students' school day.

Building on these conclusions we began to develop a special interview methodology whose explicit purpose is to encourage students to be more observant participants regarding the nature of their school experience. The methodology is organized around the common activities in which students perceive themselves to engage during school. It allows them to reveal whether PLAY and/or WORK are in fact salient facets of these activities and, if so, to articulate their common thoughts and feelings about them.

The first portion of our interview scheme builds directly on the prior participant observer and observant participant research of Elmore and Thompson (1980). In this work, three different interview methodologies have been combined to produce an interview schedule that can be characterized as being unstructured (Lofland, 1971), respondent (McCall & Simmons, 1969) and ethnographic (Spradley, 1979). Not only does this schedule allow the students to define their major daily activities, it also encourages them to describe their feelings and attitudes towards these activities, i.e., the interviewee's subjective interpretation of them, and to express these feelings and attitudes using their own vocabulary and classifications (see, Elmore & Thompson, 1980, 7-10 for details).

As in Elmore and Thompson's research, the first portion of our interview scheme asks students to guide the interviewer on an open-ended grand tour of their school day. Students are asked to recount what they did from the time they arose for school until the time they returned home. They are also asked to recount their thoughts and/or feelings about their doings. This tour allows them to lay out the sequence of their day's activities, its high and low points, and the place, if any, of PLAY and/or WORK activities.

Then, students are asked to guide the interviewer on less open-ended

mini-tours over each activity. They are probed on who did what to whom and when, where, and how. And they are also probed on why they acted as they did, as well as how they evaluated their actions.

The second portion of our interview scheme extends the research of Elmore and Thompson by fusing it with the research of Parrott (1972). Like Elmore and Thompson and other educational anthropologists (e.g., Davis, 1972; DeVoss, 1978; Everhart, 1977; Glassner, 1976; Lancy, 1978; Polgar, 1976), Parrott found that students tended to map their school day by certain activities in which they participate. Unlike these other scholars, however, she was not content to mine these maps by just naturalistic methods. Rather, she employed an interventionist technique often used in the concept elaboration studies of experimental cognitive psychologists (see Newell & Simon, 1972). Once she had identified certain key activities for her interviewees--games, tricks, and goofing around--, she conducted paired comparisons of one activity to another so as to better understand their basic similarities and differences.

Likewise, the second portion of our interview schedule asks the student to participate in an intervention, namely, a structured activity sort task. Whereas Parrott asked students to compare each activity to another, our students are asked to compare each activity to their own subjective definitions of PLAY or WORK. On the basis of our prior participant observer and observant participant research (Elmore & Thompson, 1980), we had identified twenty-three activities which our target population of students often used in parameterizing their school day. Each activity is written on an index card, and students are asked to sort the entire stack of these cards into one or more of three categores--PLAY, WORK, NEITHER--according to their own subjective definitions. They are then asked to give specific

reasons (thoughts as well as feelings) for each of their categorizations. The order in which the activities are presented is randomized.

Finally, after they have categorized each activity and justified each categorization, the students are asked several general questions about the overarching characteristics of PLAY and WORK activities. They are first asked to define what makes certain school activities PLAY and/or WORK. They are then asked if they have a particular time for PLAY and/or WORK and, if so, when. Next they are asked whether there are particular times when they feel like engaging in PLAY and not in WORK and vice versa and, if so, when. Finally, they are queried as to why they engage in PLAY activities and in WORK ones.

We are now in the process of specifying the precise psychometric properties of this two stage, naturalistic-interventionist interview schedule. Consequently, we can offer no definitive statement at this time regarding the overall quality of the responses it yields. All we can say is that the quality should be reasonably good. Both stages of the schedule are well-grounded in current methodological literature and practice as well as in our own experience. And, more importantly, the responses from one stage can be cross-checked against those from the other using a qualitative adaptation of Campbell and Fiskes (1959) multi-trait/multi-method approach since the same method was used to tap the different perceptions students might have of their PLAY or WORK activities within each stage but different methods were used across states.

Findings

To explore the socio-perceptual parameters of PLAY and WORK contexts from a student perspective, we used our observant participant interview methodology with an "availability" sample (Bracht & Glass, 1968) drawn from

an initial population of 56 largely Anglo, sex-mixed, middle to upper-middle class, Santa Barbara area students whom we had been following since their sixth grade. Recall, that in the 1978-79 academic year, we had examined all of these students' perceptions of the nature of elementary school learning. Then, in the 1979-80 academic year, we had examined 11 of these students' perceptions of the nature of elementary versus junior high school learning and home-school relationships (Elmore & Thompson, 1980).

First, we checked class rosters to determine which of these students still lived in the area. This reduced our pool of potential interviewees from 56 to 51. Then we mailed letters to all the remaining students' parents asking their consent to participate in the interviews. After allowing several weeks to respond, we followed up our initial request for consent with a new request coupled with phone calls home. These procedures netted a sample of 19 students. All but two students were Anglo, 12 were boys and 7 were girls, all were middle-class as judged by their parents occupations (mostly teachers, engineers, small business persons) and living circumstances (typically new homes in the median Santa Barbara area price range of $150,000 and up). Five of these students had been interviewed by us in both the 1978-79 and the 1979-80 academic years; the remainder, in the 1978-79 academic year alone.

Interviewees all attended the same junior high school, located in Goleta, California, a relatively affluent, predominantly white community with a population of roughly 70,000. This community is located adjacent to the University of California, Santa Barbara, and is one of a number of similar communities that comprise the Santa Barbara area. The school itself largely mirrors the characteristics of the surrounding community, with students and staff being predominantly white and middle- or upper middle-class.

In terms of its structure, the school is fairly typical of most secondary schools. Each day students attend six different classes taught by subject matter specialists. These classes are interspersed with 5-minute "passing periods" during which students travel from one class to the next, picking up books from their lockers on the way. There is also a one-half hour lunch period after the fourth period. The only major difference between the structure of this school and most other secondary schools in that the order in which students attended classes was reversed every other week, ostensibly to provide students and teachers with a degree of structural variety.

All 19 students were audio tape-interviewed between February and May 1981 by our research associate Hartwig. Each interview lasted for two to three hours. And each was conducted at home, after school, and under a pledge of complete confidentiality so as to allow the students to comment as freely as possible about the nature of their school experience.

Let us turn now to the results of these interviews. For purposes of discussion we shall begin with some of the findings of the activity sort portion of our interview schedule. Specifically, we shall focus only on how and why students categorized each activity; we shall not focus on student responses to the over-arching questions regarding PLAY and WORK that followed the activity sort because these responses have not yet been fully analyzed. We shall then return to the grand-tour/mini-tour portion of the interview to cross-check these findings. Clearly, our activity sort required students to categorize certain activities as PLAY, WORK, or NEITHER. Only the grand-tour/mini-tour portion of our interview data can tell us whether these are naturally occurring, as opposed to researcher imposed, categories for describing the students' school experience.

The Activity Sort Findings

Tables 1 and 2 summarize how each activity was categorized within each student and across all students respectively. Two comments will aid in reading these tables. First, we were unable to complete the activity sort portion of the interview schedule with students EB and KL because of home

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Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here

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visitation constraints. The - in Table 1 indicate those activities which were unsorted by these students. Second, the reader will note that some students did classify some activities in multiple ways. Not only did they classify them in multiple ways we had expected, e.g., PLAY/NEITHER, they also classified them in some ways we have not expected--especially, EITHER PLAY or WORK. While some researchers might consider these multiple classifications as evidence of unreliability in the students' categorizations and hence, throw them out, we considered them as reliable indices of our interviewee's subjective state and kept them in. A "perspective" perspective on the students' categorizations demanded that we credit insiders with being able objectively to perceive some activities in more than one way.

Looking at Tables 1 and 2, it is apparent that there were numerous variations in categorizations both between and within students. The same activity was often classified differently by different students and the same student occasionally classified the same activity in different ways.

Still, these variations are remarkably systematic when one considers the reasons students gave for their classifications. Indeed, underlying the phenotypic variations appears to be a set of remarkably consistent

Table 1

Categorizations of Activities By Student

Activities	Students																		
	J.Ba.	K.L.	S.G.	Y.W.	C.B.	M.M.	M.N.	E.B.	S.B.	J.F.	M.B.	J.M.	R.O.	K.B.	K.S.	A.M.	M.N.	R.J.	J.B.
Assemblies	P	P	E	B	P	E	P	-	N	W	P	P	P	N	E	P	P	N	WN
Assignments	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W
Bugging Kids	PN	E	P	N	N	P	P	P	E	P	PN	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Bugging Teachers	N	PN	P	PN	P	P	P	P	E	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Calisthenics	P	W	W	A	W	W	E	W	W	B	W	W	P	P	W	W	E	W	W
Cleaning Up	N	W	W	W	W	W	W	-	W	W	E	W	E	W	W	W	E	N	W
Daydreaming	P	P	P	P	N	P	P	-	N	P	P	P	P	N	P	P	P	P	P
Fighting	N	-	B	N	PN	E	PN	-	W	P	P	E	E	PN	P	PN	PN	N	P
Foodfights	E	N	P	N	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Games in Class	E	P	E	W	P	P	PN	-	P	P	P	E	P	E	P	P	P	N	P
Games Outside Class	E	P	P	W	P	P	PN	-	P	P	P	E	P	E	P	P	P	N	P
Homework	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W
Projects	E	W	E	E	P	E	W	E	W	W	W	E	W	W	N	B	P	W	WN
Reading	E	E	E	A	E	W	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
Shooting Baskets, Playing Catch, and Stuff Like That	P	-	P	P	P	P	E	-	E	W	E	P	P	P	P	E	P	P	P
Sitting Around in Class	W	-	E	W	P	N	A	-	PN	P	E	P	P	A	E	A	P	N	N
Sitting Around Outside Class	P	N	PN	N	P	P	P	-	P	P	N	P	P	P	P	P	P	N	PN
Standing in Line	N	-	N	N	N	N	PN	-	N	W	N	N	N	PN	PN	N	E	N	WN
Talking	E	E	E	P	E	E	E	E	P	P	E	E	E	PN	E	E	E	E	PN
Tests	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W
Walking	E	E	WN	WN	E	P	PN	E	PN	E	N	P	E	E	PN	P	P	P	N
Writing	W	W	E	P	W	W	W	W	W	W	E	WN	W	E	W	W	W	W	W
Waiting	N	-	N	N	N	N	P	-	N	E	N	N	W	PN	PN	N	P	N	WN

W - Work
P - Play
N - Neither

B - Both Work and Play
E - Either Work or Play
WN - Work or Neither

PN - Play or Neither
A - All Three

Table 2

Categorizations of Activities Across Students

Activities	Classifications[a] By Percentage							
	W	WN	N	PN	P	E	B	A
Assemblies	5	6	17		50	17	6	
Assignments	100							
Bugging Kids			11	11	68	11		
Bugging Teachers			5	11	80	5		
Calisthenics	63				16	11	5	5
Cleaning Up	72		11			17		
Daydreaming			17		83			
Fighting	6		18	29	23	18	6	
Foodfights			11		84	5		
Games in Class	6		6	6	61	22		
Games Outside Class				5	68	26		
Homework	100							
Projects	42	5	5		11	32	5	
Reading	5					89		5
Shooting Baskets, Playing Catch and Stuff Like That	6				71	22		
Sitting Around in Class	12		18	6	29	18		18
Sitting Around Outside Class			21	11	67			
Standing in Line	6	6	65	18		6		
Talking				11	16	74		
Tests	100							
Walking		11	11	16	26	37		
Writing	74	5			5	16		
Waiting	6	6	59	12	12	6		

[a] W = WORK
WN = WORK/NEITHER
N = NEITHER
PN = PLAY/NEITHER
P = PLAY
E = EITHER WORK OR PLAY
B = BOTH WORK AND PLAY
A = WORK, NEITHER, PLAY

genotypic perceptions as to what is and is not PLAY Or WORK. Let us elaborate on these perceptions by concentrating, first, on the reasons students gave for classifying some activities as basically NEITHER PLAY Nor WORK, and then move on to discuss the reasons they gave for classifying other activities as basically WORK, PLAY, and EITHER PLAY Or WORK, respectively. As was can see in Tables 1 and 2, each activity was categorized by most of the students in one or more of these four ways.

NEITHER PLAY Nor WORK

Two activities were categorized by a majority of our interviewees as being NEITHER PLAY Nor WORK--waiting and standing in line. One common perception seemed to underpin this categorization. Both activities were perceived as ones in which the student was doing nothing rather than something or, more specifically, something associated with PLAY or WORK.

S.B. and R.J., for example, strike the general doing-nothing-versus-doing-something theme. R.J. speaks of waiting:

> "You're just sitting there waiting for something to happen and you're not doing anything."

S.B. says of standing in line:

> "You're not doing anything; you're just standing around."

M.B., J.M. and A.M. strike the more specific not-doing-the-something-associated-with-PLAY-or-WORK theme. M.B. describes standing in line:

> "It's nothing. It's not goofing-off and it's not work, cause you're not doing anything."

Likewise, J.M. and A.M., respectively, say of waiting:

> "It's not play 'cause it's not really fun; who likes to wait? And it's not work 'cause you don't have to think about it, you just sort of stand there."

> "It's not work 'cause no one forces you. And it's not play 'cause you'd rather do something else with your friends instead."

WORK

As the preceding section suggests, one "something" that students perceived they could do was to engage in WORK activities. Moreover, as J.M.'s and A.M.'s quotes imply, these activities were perceived to have certain defining qualities. Recall that J.M. suggested they involve thinking while A.M. indicated they are coercive. Let us now examine the nature of WORK activities in greater detail.

Three activities were categorized by all interviewees as being WORK--assignments, homework, and tests; and a fourth activity--writing things--was so categorized by about three-quarters of them. Underlying these WORK categorizations seemed to be three common perceptions.

Have to do it. First, WORK activities were routinely characterized as ones students had to do. The words "you have to do it" or their connotative equivalents peppered our interviews. For example, K.B., J.Ba., J.B. and M.B. comment on assignments, homework, tests and writing thing, respectively:

> "It's assigned. You have to do it. If you didn't have to get it done, it wouldn't be an assignment."
>
> "It's something you have to do--it's a must."
>
> "You have to--you just can't not take a test."
>
> "Those are assignments, too. You have to do it, you have to get it done..."

The "it" that students perceive they have to do apparently involves both matters of substance and of form. The substance is chosen by the teacher. R.O., for example, describes assignments:

> "You gotta know what you're doing...If the teacher says something you gotta write about it, you gotta know what he said."

Likewise, M.N. confides about tests:

> "You're tested on what they gave you to learn and from what you have to find out from books."

The form in which the substance will be studied is determined by the teacher too. To illustrate, Y.W. notes that her assignments consist of:

> "...papers and dittoes that I have to take home..."

M.N. finds that in doing homework:

> "You try to get the right answers...have to read questions and write down everything."

R.J. finds that tests require him:

> "...to study-up the night before...make sure you know everything. You have to look-up old work and find the right subject."

And M.N. comments about writing things:

> "...if you had to write a paragraph on a book or a summary,... you'd have to recall from what was in the book and write it down in so many words."

Beyond perceiving that WORK activites have a required form and substance chosen by others and not themselves, our interviewees also told us what some of these substance and form parameters actually were. The substance parameters varied by subject matter. E.B. speaking of writing things, for example, says:

> "You have to remember how to spell all the words. You have to remember how to write a complete sentence and where to put periods and commas and stuff."

The form parameters seemed to cut across subject matters, falling into three sets. These were physical, personal, and social.

One set of form parameters was <u>physical</u>, involving especially matters of time and place. WORK activities were ones to be done in class or at home under certain time constraints. As S.B., speaking of assignments, indicates:

> "...the teacher wants you to get it done before the end of class."

Or as K.B. comments on her homework:

"If it weren't for homework, you could be going out or something. Instead, you have to stay home and work."

A second set of form parameters was personal, involving matters of physical, intellectual and emotional comfort.

First, our interviewees spoke of the personal physical demands engendered by WORK activities. S.B., for example, speaks of the physical toll sometimes taken by homework:

"When you have a lot, you stay up real late working on it."

Likewise, K.L. and K.W. speak of the strain associated with tests. K.L., to be specific, mentions "writer's cramp," while both of them mention "headaches." And E.B., in relation to writing things notes:

"Your hand gets tired, and your finger starts to hurt from rubbing against the pencil."

Second, our interviewees spoke of the peronal intellectual demands engendered by WORK activities. The activities are described as being hard, as requiring concentration, special mental effort, memory, and thinking. J.B. and A.M., for example, say of assignments, respectively:

"It's hard to do...you really have to think about it."

"You have to use your mind. You have to put out a special effort."

Likewise, E.B. and M.B. comment on homework:

"That's a brain strain...'cause there's lots to do and sometimes you get confused."

"You can't do anything else in between 'cause if you do anything else, it messes you up. You go really slow and you can't concentrate. You have to be concentrating on it."

M.M., E.B., and M.U., respectively, speak about writing things:

"That's hard 'cause you have to, like, stick to the topic sentence and you can't do run-on sentences and punctuations gotta be right. You know commas where you should put commas; and spelling."

> "You have to remember how to spell all the words. You have to remember how to write a complete sentence and where to put periods and commas and stuff."
>
> "You're having to write and concentrate all your knowledge on that, or brain power."

And M.M. notes about tests:

> "Tests are work 'cause they're hard for me. I have to study hard, 'cause if you don't learn it good, the test will be really difficult."

Third, our interviewees spoke of the personal emotional demands engendered by WORK activities. These activities are described constantly as emotional low points: boring, pressure packed, anxiety provoking. For example, A.M. comments on assignments:

> "You do all this stuff that's boring like cutting off a tiny piece of plant and putting it under a microscope, or writing things down or taking notes";

while J.M. says of homework:

> "They usually aren't interesting; they're usually boring."

Likewise K.L. and A.M. describe tests:

> "...it really puts on the pressure--yeah! That's a good word. Pressure is also work, I think, 'cause it's, you know, mental anguish."
>
> "Taking a test, that's work...because a test, you know, you're nervous because, you know, it's your grade."

The final set of form parameters was <u>social</u>. WORK activities were perceived as one you did alone and without friends. M.M., for example, strikes the aloneness theme when he comments that one of the chief problems with homework is:

> "There's no one there to help."

And R.J. and S.B. strike the without-friends theme when they categorize assignments and tests, respectively, to be worklike simply because each precludes talking to friends:

"...you want to talk instead of work. You might have something else to talk about and instead you have to do the work."

"You're not allowed to talk."

We have treated these physical, personal and social parameters, of course, as if they were conceptually independent percepts to students. In reality, though, they were often phenomenally interactive. That is, each interviewee usually perceived WORK activities as having some combination of physical, personal and social characteristics. This phenomenal interaction is illustrated in A.M.'s comments about homework:

"That's uncalled for, 'cause you spend six hours a day at school and after school you want to relax, go outside, goof around with your friends, go places. But you're stuck inside because of homework."

Don't want to. So far, we have seen that the first perception that our interviewees shared about WORK activities is that you have to do them. Not only do you have to work on certain substance selected by the teacher, you have to work on that substance in certain ways, i.e., under certain physical, personal and social constraints. Given the nature of this substance and the nature of these constraints, the second perception that our interviewees shared about WORK activities should come as no surprise. Although students had to do them, they did not want to. In fact, WORK activities were somewhat resented.

The general idea that working is doing-something-you-don't-want-to-do runs all through our interviews. For example, M.B. is expansive as she describes assignments:

"When you're working, you're thinking about what the teachers make you think about. And if you're thinking about other things, your mind is ranging around and it's not really work, 'cause working is making yourself do something that you don't want to do."

J Ba., M.U. and J.M. are more laconic as they characterize homework, tests and assignments, respectively:

"Nobody likes to do it...there's nothing worse than homework..."

"You don't want to take the test--you'd rather not."

"I don't like it. It's not interesting."

The more specific idea that WORK activities were somewhat resented is also apparent in some of our interviews. To illustrate, consider the following comments by A.M., M.B., K.L. and J.Ba. on assignments, homework, tests, and writing things, respectively:

"They assign it to you. You have to do it...when you have to do something, you don't want to do something...you do all this stuff that's boring."

"It's plenty easier to keep your concentration going on stuff that's not work than when it's work. Like when you're on homework you start thinking about things: 'What am I doing this stupid homework for?'"

"There's the mental anguish of knowing that some kid on the other side of the world is out playing..."

"It's a pain in the butt, 'cause it's hard. It takes up too much time, 'cause you gotta take time to think; you gotta do a rough draft and a final copy. And I write slow."

Because you're graded. If students have to do something they do not want to do, then the question naturally arises as to what motivates them to complete their WORK activities. This brings us to the third, and final, perception that our interviewees shared. Students were motivated by grades--especially the fear of bad grades.

The theme of grades appeared frequently in our interviews. For example, E.B. and K.L., respectively, speak of the impact of grades on doing assignments:

"You have to do 'em or else the teacher will do something like give you a bad grade...you're under pressure to do it."

> "There's the pressure knowing that afterwards he's going to correct it and mark it down in his book, his infamous little book."

Y.W. expresses a similar sentiment about homework:

> "You have to set aside part of the day to think about school, which I just got out of and which I don't want to think about...'cause I want to avoid F's and D's."

And A.M. and K.L. echo Y.W. regarding tests:

> "Taking a test, that's work...because a test, you know, you're nervous, because you know it's your grade. You have to pass or else you get a bad grade."

> "If you have to get an A on the test, like if the teacher's only handing out so many A's then it really puts on the pressure."

Our interviewees did express concern about bad grades in terms of their future aspirations--especially vocational and educational. But most of the pressure stemmed from more immediate concerns. M.N., for example, comments on the hassles one can encounter with teachers if he doesn't turn in assignments:

> "It has to be turned into them; so many pages in so many nights and if they're not on time the teacher hassles you..."

And not only might the teacher hassle you, you might also hassle yourself. Consider the observations of Y.W. on why it was important to do well on tests and to not draw a blank:

> "Drawing a blank is bad 'cause others think I'm stupid, the teacher thinks I'm stupid--I think I'm stupid! And I get a bad grade I don't deserve. The teacher says 'study harder!' but I am studying hard! If I were to study any more my head would bust."

Apparently, engaging in WORK activities is hassle enough; students do not want to bring upon themselves the additional hassles that can result from not turning in assignments and homework or for not studying for tests.

PLAY

If the preceding section on WORK activities seemed long, it should. Our interviewees had much more to say about the nature of their WORK activities than about the nature of their PLAY ones. Indeed, many times in describing why something was categorized as PLAY, our interviewees seemed to feel it was sufficient to say that is was "not work." Though this phrase was denotatively short, it was still connotatively rich given the depth of their perceptions regarding WORK activities. Let us now examine in greater detail the nature of PLAY activities and some of these connotations.

While no activity was categorized by all interviewees as PLAY, several--daydreaming, foodfights and bugging teachers--were so categorized by at least three-fourths of them. Underpinning these categorizations seemed to be three common perceptions, perceptions which, as we shall see, were exactly the reverse of those which underpinned their WORK categorizations.

Don't have to do it. PLAY activities were commonly perceived as ones you did not have to do. Indeed, they were so voluntary that you did them even though you were not supposed to.

J.B., E.B., and J.B. strike the you-don't-have-to-do-it theme about daydreaming, foodfights, and bugging teachers, respectively:

> "It's not something anybody is forcing you to do."

> "It's not work. You don't have any homework in it or nothing. You don't have to do it. It's voluntary."

> "It's not something you're forced to do. You just do it on your own."

And K.S., M.M. and M.B. strike the you-don't-have-to-do-it, in fact, you're-not-supposed-to" theme about these same activities:

> "It's not doing what you're supposed to do. You're off somewhere else."

> "You're not allowed to do that or you get paper pick-up."

"You're not supposed to do it--you get detention."

The "it" that students don't-have-to-do, indeed are not-supposed-to-do, apparently involves the substantive and formatual requirements of WORK activities. Students clearly perceive PLAY activities as ones where they choose the subject and format even if this means violating the constraints of WORK. To take a single activity, consider foodfights.

Foodfignts are perceived as an activity in which the subject of eating lunch is translated into the subject of making a mess. As K.S. notes:

> "You're not supposed to have a foodfight. You're not supposed to make a mess."

Moreover, foodfights are perceived as activities in which certain personal and social constraints associated with WORK are breeched. To illustrate, the fights are not physically, mentally or emotionally demanding on the personal side. As M.M., R.J., S.B. and J.M., respectively, note:

> "It's not hard to take a spoon and go 'whack'."
>
> "You don't really think of what you're supposed to be doing."
>
> "You don't have to do it and you don't really care about anything."

Nor are they solitary and without friends on the social side. As M.N. and R.D. point out:

> "It's not work 'cause the students start it. Its between students."
>
> "You do it with your friends."

Want to do. Given the element of choice involved, it should not be surprising that the second perception our students shared of PLAY activities is that they wanted-to-do them. A.M., in particular, strikes this want to do theme in his discussion of all three PLAY activities--foodfights, daydreaming, and bugging teachers, respectively:

> "It's something you want to do."

"That's not work 'cause that's what your mind wants to do."

"It's something you want to do."

Because students want to do PLAY activities, they also seek them out. Y.W. and M.U., for example, comment on how they pursue daydreaming:

> "...there are certain times when you have to daydream. Like when you can't understand what's happening or you're trying and it hasn't worked...the only way I can calm down is daydreaming."

> "Usually you daydream 'cause you don't want to do the work and you want to think of something else...You also do it when you're bored."

And E.B. describes how he pursues "bugging teachers,"

> "It's not work 'cause the teachers don't like it. Things that people don't like, you usually think are fun to do 'cause it irritates them and they get all mad. And teachers don't like that, so you just do it and they get mad."

Because it's fun. What, then, motivated our interviewees to want to do these particular activities? After all, there were other activities on our list--e.g., playing games outside of class--which, from an adult perspective, should have been viewed as ones students don't-have-to-do and want-to-do. Yet these activities were not rated as PLAY-like as foodfights, daydreaming, or bugging teachers.

The third perception our interviewees shared about PLAY activities is that they were "fun." Indeed, no single word was used more frequently to characterize them. J.M., M.M., and M.U. commented regarding foodfights, daydreaming and bugging teachers, respectively:

"It's not work 'cause you're having fun."

"It's fun. You're not doing any work."

"It's fun, really fun."

Our interviewees were not expansive, however, when asked to define what they meant by the term "fun." Indeed, for them "fun" seemed to be a term that was self-explanatory and required no elaboration, somewhat akin in

many respects to mountain climbers' proverbial explanation for doing what they do "Because it's there."

As nearly as we can determine from this portion of our data set, "fun" seems to refer to the experience of doing something they want to do simply for their own pleasure. The key terms here are "own" and "pleasure."

PLAY activities seem to yield physical, mental and emotional pleasures which stand in contrast to the pains associated with WORK activities. Our interviewees, for example, repeatedly spoke of play activities as exciting, challenging, funny, enjoyable, humorous, carefree, etc. Consider the comments of A.M. on foodfights and of S.B. on foodfights and bugging teachers:

> "It's fun. You're just throwing food at each other having a good time. And you joke around after it's finished."

> "It's fun, like watching people get smashed. It's kinda funny. Like, it's things that make you laugh--like work doesn't make you laugh."

> "It's fun. You're laughing--just seeing what would happen."

PLAY activities also yield pleasures that result from the student's own sense of control over the situation (c.f. Garvey, 1979), even though this control may not be total. The observations of Y.W. on bugging teachers and of K.L. on daydreaming are illustrative:

> "Sometimes it's fun. Like when Mr. X says 'How come you don't understand this?' 'Well I just don't!' 'Well, why don't you understand it?' 'I don't know.' ...He's responding to my little problems...He's playing my game."

> "Daydreaming is fun 'cause you can do it by yourself, with a friend, you can be as creative as you want. There are no restrictions on it except it may reduce your grade."

So important is this sense of self-control over the conditions of pleasure in fact, that when it is violated, even PLAY activities become not fun. K.B. and E.B. say of foodfights, for example:

> "It's fun--except for when you get hit."

> "Making a mess is always fun--except when you have to clean it up."

And when self-control has been lost in a particular activity, students will regain it by "getting back" at their perceived tormentors (c.f. Bettelheim, 1972). E.B., for example, describes a "fun" strategy for "getting back" at overbearing teachers:

> "That can get fun too, 'cause they get mad at you and stuff and then you start arguing with 'em. So they send you to the office. And you sit there and usually they don't do anything to you. So you just get away with it...Things that people don't like you usually think are fun to do, 'cause it irritates them and they get all mad. And teachers don't like that, so you just do it and they get mad."

EITHER PLAY Or WORK

So far we have seen that from a student perspective both PLAY and WORK activities involve doing something rather than nothing. But in WORK activities the something one does is done because you have to, even though you don't want to, for purposes of grades, whereas in PLAY activities it is done because you don't have to, you want to, for purposes of fun. If this analysis is correct, then we should find that those activities that were characterized as being EITHER PLAY Or WORK should be perceived as being chameleon-like, possessing mostly WORK characteristics at some times and mostly PLAY characteristics at other times.

Two activities were categorized by about three-quarters of our interviewees as being EITHER PLAY Or WORK--reading and talking. And, indeed, underpinning student categorizations of these activities was each activity's chameleon-like character.

Rather than regaling the reader with a full treatment of our interviewees perceptions of reading and talking, let us concentrate on Y.W.'s comments on reading and A.M.'s and K.S.'s comments on talking, respectively.

Y.W. says reading is WORK:

> "...if you're reading aloud, 'cause you don't like to --people notice you and that's embarrassing. You have to read it and describe what it's saying or you have to study it for a test. I hate that, 'cause it takes the enjoyment out of it. You have no choice of the book you read..."

It's PLAY:

> "...when I choose the book, on my own time; I read the book when I want, where I want to and I don't need to worry about anything else."

A.M. and K.S., respectively, characterize talking as WORK if:

> "You're in class and you have to talk and you have to have the right answer, 'cause it's for a grade."

> "...you have to talk about it. Like he asks you what's your opinion about it or what is your answer...You're having to do it in front of the class, and you get all embarrassed. Or it's something you didn't know about and you have to say what you thought it was and you're not sure it's right. You have to talk and you hope to say the right thing."

But they characterize talking as PLAY when:

> "...you're with your friends. You talk about normal stuff... It's what we want to do. You're with your friends and you talk to them about anything, about what you want to talk or joke about. It's not what the teacher wants."

> "...you talk to your friends about different subjects. You don't have to worry about the right answers. You're just talking about anything--free talk."

While neither Y.W.'s nor A.M's and K.S.'s quotes characterize reading or talking as containing all the previously discussed socio-perceptual features of WORK or PLAY, they do characterize them as containing most of these features. First, both reading and talking are WORK when you have to do them, and PLAY when you don't have to; moreover, when reading and talking are viewed as WORK, what you have to do is to labor under certain substantive and formatual constraints which are not present when they are viewed as PLAY. Second, both reading and talking are WORK when you do not want to do them, and PLAY when you do. And lastly, both reading and

talking are WORK when you have to do it for a test, right answers, and ultimately a grade, and they are PLAY when you don't.

The Grand-Tour/Mini-Tour Findings

So far, we have seen how students perceived the nature of their school activities under interview conditions which imposed the categories of PLAY, WORK, and NEITHER to help them articulate their perceptions. We have seen that under these "artifically occurring" conditions that both PLAY and WORK activities were commonly perceived as ones wherein one does something rather than nothing. But the "something" students did in WORK activities appeared to be very different than the "something" they did in PLAY ones. WORK activities were commonly perceived as ones students had to do, even though they did not want to, because they were graded. Whereas PLAY activities were commonly perceived as ones students did not have to do, but they wanted to do, because they were fun.

Now let us examine how students perceived the nature of their school activities under the more "naturally occurring" interview conditions which characterized the grand-tour/mini-tour portion of our interview schedule. If WORK, PLAY, and NEITHER are student-generated rather than researcher-imposed categories, then we should find that students do naturally use these categories to reference the nature of their school experience.

To analyze our grand-tour/mini-tour data, we began by establishing an analytical unit. For this purpose, we employed the concept of goal recursion, one that applies in any kind of situation in which a person achieves a set of hierarchially ordered sub-goals in the context of achieving a larger more global goal (Newell & Simon, 1972). We viewed the grand-tour/mini-tour portion of our interview schedule as presenting students with the global goal of describing their school day in as much detail as possible.

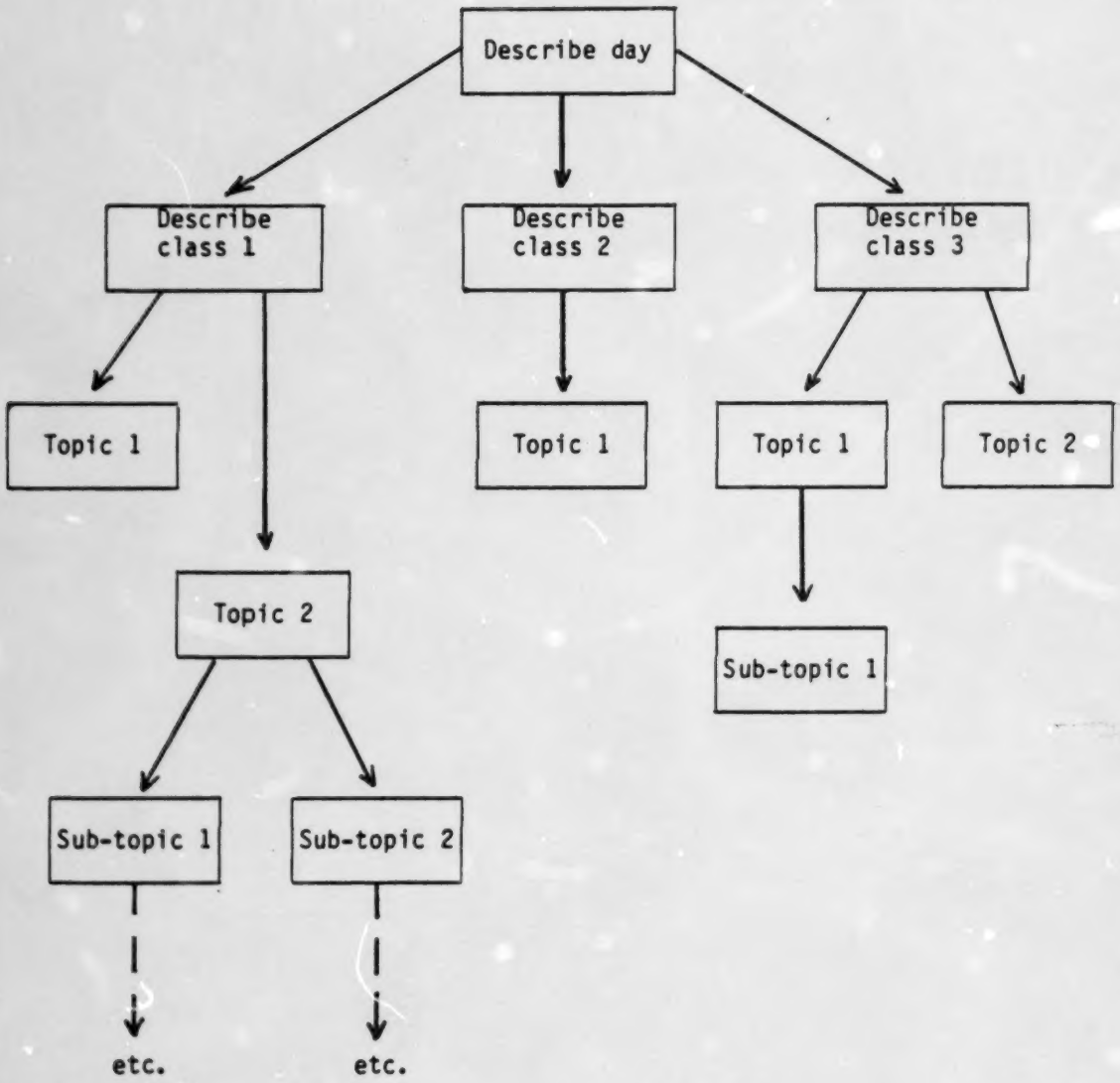
To meet this goal, the students had to achieve a set of hierarchially ordered sub-goals, viz., to describe the various segments of that day.

Using the concept of goal recursion, we identified "topics" as one possible unit of analysis. It appeared to us (see Figure 1) that to describe their school day in as much detail as possible, students typically explained what happened in each of their classes. Each class was explained by discussing pertinent topics, and each topic was elaborated by supplementary sub-topics.

Since the enthographic research of Mehan (1979), Cazden (1979) and our own students (e.g., DeVoss, 1979; Elmore & Thompson, 1980) had also suggested that "topics" were a useful unit of analysis for examining the larger organizational features of school activities and since we believed that WORK, PLAY, and NEITHER WORK Nor PLAY were examplars of such features, we then began to examine our grand-tour/mini-tour interview data on a student by topic basis. We started by identifying the various subjects or classes to which the student referred. Within each subject, we then searched for those "verbal markers" (Mehan, 1979) that typically denote the beginning of one topic and the end of another. Mehan's beginning markers were words such as "uh," "now," "okay," "um, now, um," "uh, let's see," and "and last of all" and "that's right." Our beginning and ending markers were more elaborate, perhaps because our students were much older. In introducing a topic, the interviewee typically began to describe a particular object, person, activity, event or place associated with a particular class and to treat the object, etc., as the main "subject" of the discussion (ala the "subject" of a sentence). This topic would be elaborated with clarifying remarks, background explanations, parentheticals and examples. The interviewee would then move on to a new topic by denoting either that s/he

Figure 1

Goal Recursion for Describing School Day



wished to speak about a new "subject" associated with the same class or that s/he wished to speak about a new class. While the interviewee might return to the old topic in discussing the new one, the old topic clearly was now an "object" of the discussion (ala the "object" of a sentence) and not the subject.

Once we had identified the topics each student used in describing each subject, each topic was then examined for the presence of one or more of those characteristics we had isolated in our activity sort data as being characteristic of WORK or PLAY, i.e., have to do, but don't want to do, for grades characteristics or don't have to do, want to do, for fun characteristics. We also examined each topic for specific mention of the words WORK and/or PLAY, as well as for specific mention of their common synonyms (e.g., labor or job for WORK, goofing off or messing around for PLAY). Each topic was then given a '+' for WORK and/or a '+' for PLAY if it contained a reference to one or more of the appropriate characteristics and/or words.

Tables 3 and 4 summarize by subjects and students our topical analysis

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Insert Tables 3 and 4 about here

---

of the grand-tour/mini-tour data. Table 3 indicates by subject and student the total number of topics each student used to describe the subject and the proportion of those topics in which WORK and/or PLAY characteristics or terminology were spontaneously referenced. Note that the responses of student J.B. have been omitted from this table due to tape defects with portions of her grand-tour/mini-tour interview. Table 4 then indicates by subject and student the total number of topics in which WORK and/or PLAY

Table 3

Student Spontaneous References to All Topics As Being WORK and/or PLAY-like[a]

Class	Students																		
	J.Ba.	K.L.	S.G.	Y.W.	C.B.	M.M.	M.U.	E.B.	S.B.	J.F.	M.B.	J.M.	R.O.	K.B.	K.S.	A.M.	M.N.	R.J.	$\bar{p}$
Art			0(1)								0(1)				67(3)				.40 (1)
Computer		80(5)																	.80 (5)
Cooking			0(1)												57(7)				.50 (8)
Drafting							0(2)	100(1)		33(6)					100(1)	100(1)			.45 (11)
English	100(2)	100(2)	0(1)	83(6)	50(2)	100(3)	50(4)	0(1)	0(1)	83(6)	100(1)	50(2)	0(2)	89(9)	50(6)	100(1)	100(3)	0(1)	.69 (52)
Guitar						100(1)													1.00 (1)
Math	100(1)	100(3)	100(1)	100(3)	0(1)	67(3)	75(4)	0(1)	100(1)	100(2)	25(4)	50(4)	100(2)	67(3)	33(3)	100(1)	100(1)	0(1)	.67 (39)
Metal									0(1)										.00 (1)
Music																	100(1)		1.00 (1)
Office Aid											100(2)								1.00 (2)
P.E.	50(2)	67(3)	0(1)	75(4)	100(1)	100(5)	60(5)	0(1)	0(1)	17(6)	100(2)	83(6)	100(2)	80(5)	33(3)	60(5)	100(2)	0(1)	.54 (55)
P.E. Aid					100(1)			0(1)											.50 (2)
Power Mech.	100(1)																	100(1)	1.00 (2)
Science	100(1)			100(3)	0(1)	50(2)	100(3)		100(1)			20(5)	25(4)	67(3)	100(1)	100(1)		0(1)	.58 (26)
Science Aid		80(5)																	.80 (5)
Social Studies	50(2)	75(4)	0(1)	82(11)	0(1)			0(1)	0(1)	60(5)		0(3)	100(2)	89(9)		100(1)	0(1)	100(1)	.65 (43)
Spanish				80(5)		100(3)	100(4)			100(1)									.92 (13)
Theater Arts												67(3)							.67 (3)
Typing											100(1)		100(1)						1.00 (2)
Wood														100(2)					1.00 (2)
$\bar{p}$	.77 (9)	.82 (22)	.17 (6)	.84 (32)	.43 (7)	.89 (17)	.68 (22)	.17 (6)	.33 (6)	.54 (26)	.64 (11)	.48 (23)	.62 (13)	.84 (31)	.52 (23)	.80 (10)	.88 (8)	.33 (6)	.66 (278)

[a]The numbers in the parentheses are the total number of topics discussed. The numbers adjacent to the parentheses are the proportions of these topics referenced as being WORK and/or PLAY-like.

Table 4

Student Spontaneous References to WORK/PLAY Topics As Being PLAY-like[a]

Class	Students																		$\bar{P}$
	J.Ba.	K.L.	S.G.	Y.W.	C.B.	M.M.	M.U.	E.B.	S.B.	J.F.	M.S.	J.M.	R.O.	K.B.	K.S.	A.M.	M.N.	R.J.	
Art															0(2)				.00 (2)
Computer		50(4)																	.50 (4)
Cooking					100(1)										0(4)				.20 (5)
Drafting								0(1)		50(2)						0(1)	0(1)		.20 (5)
English	0(2)	100(2)		80(5)	0(1)	33(3)	50(2)			20(5)	100(1)	0(1)		62(8)	0(3)	0(1)	50(2)	0(1)	.44 (36)
Guitar						100(1)													1.00 (1)
Math	100(1)	0(3)	0(1)	67(3)		0(2)	33(3)		0(1)	0(2)	100(1)	50(2)	0(2)	50(2)	0(1)	0(1)	0(1)	0(1)	.67 (39)
Metal																			--
Music																		0(1)	.00 (1)
Office Aid											50(2)								.50 (2)
P.E.	100(1)	100(2)		0(3)	100(1)	60(5)	33(3)			0(1)	50(2)	40(5)	100(2)	50(4)	0(1)	100(3)	50(2)	0(1)	.54 (35)
P.E. Aid					0(1)														.00 (1)
Power Mech.	100(1)																	100(1)	1.00 (2)
Science	0(1)			100(3)		0(1)	100(3)		0(1)			0(1)	100(1)	0(2)	0(1)	0(1)			.47 (15)
Science Aid		75(4)																	.75 (4)
Social Studies	100(1)	100(3)		89(9)						33(3)			50(2)	12(8)		0(1)		0(1)	.54 (28)
Spanish				25(4)		67(3)	25(4)			0(1)									.33 (12)
Theater Arts												0(2)							.00 (2)
Typing											0(1)		0(1)						.00 (2)
Wood														50(2)					.50 (2)
$\bar{P}$	.57 (7)	.67 (18)	.00 (1)	.67 (27)	.50 (4)	.47 (15)	.47 (15)	.00 (1)	.00 (2)	.21 (14)	.57 (7)	.27 (11)	.50 (8)	.38 (26)	.00 (12)	.38 (8)	.29 (7)	.50 (2)	.43 (185)

[a]The numbers in the parentheses are the total number of WORK-PLAY topics discussed. The numbers adjacent to the parentheses are the proportion of these topics references as being WORK and/or PLAY-like.

characteristics or terminology were referenced and the proportion of these references which were PLAY ones.

Two points are apparent from the data in these tables. The data from Table 3 suggest that students did spontaneously discuss many of their interview topics as being WORK and/or PLAY-like. On the average, about two out of every three topics were referenced by WORK/PLAY characteristics or terminology. And the data from Table 4 suggest that students did spontaneouly discuss these topics as having both a PLAY-like and a WORK-like flavor. Indeed, just under half of the topics were referenced by PLAY characteristics and/or terminology and just over half by WORK ones.

Some Limitations

Before we attempt to discuss our activity-sort and our grand-tour/mini-tour findings, two caveats are in order. One concerns the "goodness" of our interview scoring techniques; the other concerns the "narrowness" of our interview sample. The former may affect to some extent the interpretability of our findings; the latter, their generalizability (Bracht & Glass, 1968).

We are concerned about the "representativeness" (Snow, 1974) of the techniques we have used to "code" students' responses to the grand-tour/mini-tour section of our interview schedule. From the outset of the schedule's construction, we proceeded on the assumption that if we could just tap students' capacities to be "observant participants," then we would obtain a simpler picture of the nature of their school experience than most participant observers and outside observers usually attain.

Well, the picture was simpler in many respects. We observed, for example, that most students used a very limited set of terms to describe the nature of that experience and that these terms could be chained to form

some personal verbal equations (e.g., work = have to do + don't want to + for grades) that seemed to denote a good deal about it. But the picture was not quite as simple as we expected. Some terms, for example "fun," did more than denote a good deal about the nature of the school experience, they connoted a good deal as well. So we were occasioned to move beyond the denotative level of analysis in coding interview responses to the connotative.

This move was like opening Pandora's box. Not only did we find that the connotative analysis of oral interactional data such as interviews is a relatively new field, we also found it is one strewn with competing analytical schemes and riven with methodological debates. There were differences in schemes among various disciplines (e.g., sociology versus psychology versus linguistics) as well as differences within each discipline (e.g., psycho- versus sociolinguistics) (see, e.g., Brislin, 1980; Wilkinson, in press). So not being experts in all of these disciplines, nor having the time to become so, we were forced to select grand-tour/mini-tour scoring techniques with which we were familiar, namely, goal recursion and topical analysis. Whether these familiar techniques were also the most appropriate techniques for our particular kind of interview data is an open question.

Another open question concerns our sample. We are concerned about its representativeness not from the standpoint of size, but from the standpoint of composition. Various researchers have suggested that background variables such as sex (Lever, 1978), race (e.g., Ogbu, 1979), social class (Anyon, 1980; Wilcox, 1982), and achievement level (Weinstein, 1981) may affect student perceptions regarding the nature of the school experience. Yet, with the exception of sex, our "availability sample" was relatively homogeneous with respect to such background variable differences. Whether

a compositionally more robust sample would have yielded different findings than our availability sample is an intriguing issue.

Neither our concern for the representativeness of our grand-tour/mini-tour scoring scheme nor our sample should be misconstrued, however. We view neither kind of unrepresentativeness as being devastating to our findings. Why? One reason is that most interview research of this kind suffers from the same "representativeness" flaw in scoring. But remember we have not relied on only the grand-tour/mini-tour scoring scheme for tapping student perceptions of their PLAY and WORK; we still have the scored data from the activity sort portion of the interview. The other reason is that evidence is accumulating that different students may not have that many different perceptions of the school experience anyway. Rather, most students may share rather common perceptions of the basic parameters of that experience (see, e.g., Filby & Barnett, in press), but weigh these parameters differently under one set of classroom conditions than others (see, e.g., Anyon, 1980; King, 1979, 1981; Wilcox, 1982).

No, we construe the "representativeness" problems associated with our grand-tour/mini-tour scoring scheme and with our sample as simply pointing to the fact that our findings will have to be replicated under various methodological conditions. Fortunately, some conceptual replications of our research on student PLAY (e.g., King, 1981; Licata, 1979; Henderson, 1981) and WORK (e.g., Anyon, 1980; King, 1981; Wilcox, 1982) are already under way and these replications are producing results amazingly similar to our own (King, personal commuication).

Review and Discussion

A brief review is now in order. The purpose of this paper has been to explore a student perspective on their PLAY and WORK and, in particular, to

begin examining why they engage in PLAY and WORK, not how--i.e., the context of their behavior, not its text. Moreover, we have been concerned with only the defining socio-perceptual parameters of their PLAY and WORK, i.e., the common perceptions students have of them.

To explore these parameters, an availability sample of white, sex-mixed, middle-class, suburban, local eighth graders was interviewed using a specially designed observant participant methodology. One part of the methodology asked students to conduct the interviewer on a grand-tour and then various mini-tours over the nature of their school day. This part taps whether PLAY and/or WORK are salient natural perceptual features of their school life. The other part of the methodology asked students to participate in a structured activity-sort of common school activities into PLAY, WORK, or NEITHER categories and to reflect upon their reasons for categorizing each activity. This part helps students to articulate their precise thoughts and feelings about the nature of their PLAY and WORK.

To analyze our interview responses, we began with the bulk of the activity-sort data. These data suggested that both WORK and PLAY activities were commonly perceived as ones wherein students did something rather than nothing. But the "something" students did in WORK activities appeared to be very different than the "something" they did in PLAY ones. WORK activities were commonly perceived as ones students had to do, even though they did not want to, because they were graded. Whereas PLAY activities were commonly perceived as ones students did not have to do, but they wanted to do, because they were fun. When the same activity was categorized as being either PLAY or WORK, it was commonly perceived as being chameleon-like, sometimes possessing characteristics of PLAY and other times of WORK.

Having identified some of the basic socio-perceptual parameters of

their WORK and PLAY, we then turned to analyze our grand-tour/mini-tour data to see whether WORK and PLAY were, in fact, salient natural perceptual features of their school day. These data suggested that students did naturally describe most topics in their tours in WORK- and/or PLAY-like terms. And they naturally described these topics in PLAY terms only slightly less than as they described them in WORK terms.

What, then, is the importance of these findings? Or as Moore (1981) in a paper entitled the "Pedagogy of Experience" puts the question more graphically:

> "So what? Once we have established that people in a specific context use certain structuring procedures to accomplish their interactions, we have to ask what differences those procedures make in the education of participants. The connection is not self-evident." (p. 289)

What are the educational consequences of schools as contexts for WORK for PLAY (Sutton-Smith, 1977)?

Since we have already begun to develop one answer to this question elsewhere (Block, 1981), let us develop another answer here. Let us focus on the implications of our research for the <u>improvement</u> of school practices and especially for contemporary public school instructional theory and practice. Suffice it to say that our other answer focused on the implications of our research for the <u>description</u> of school practices and especially for "doing the anthropology of schooling" (Spindler, 1982). We contended that our research should encourage educational anthropologists and other chroniclers:

1) to continue to focus (e.g., Batcher, 1981) on other aspects of the school context besides its WORK or techno-economic (Ogbu, 1978) ones. PLAY was almost as central to student life as WORK in our data, but even these data indicated that PLAY and WORK helped explain only a portion of that life. One-third of the topics our interviewees mentioned in the grand-tour/mini-tour of a school day, for example, made no reference to PLAY or to WORK at all.

2) to focus on these aspects from the student perspective. As Fein (1980), Denzin (1977), Goodman (1970). Kandel and Lesser (1972) and others have suggested, we still know relatively little about the nature of the "idio-culture" (Fein, 1979) that Glassner (1976), Coleman (1971), and Keniston (1970) respectively have referred to as "kid," "adolescent," and "youth" society except that it's different than adult society in certain respects and similar in others. In so far as the student "career" (Lacy, 1978) cuts across childhood, adolesence, and youth, the study of schooling from a student perspective may tell us much about the nature of that idio-culture. Indeed, our data suggest that perhaps the experience of going to school and being a student shapes the nature of human development in ways that adults might never suspect (c.f. Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Denzin, 1977). Imagine, for example, how the student perceptions of school work we have identified might shape their perceptions of adult work. We certainly would not want to "work" for a living if we had such perceptions.

3) to use a "perspective" perspective in studying the student perspective on their schooling. This will help insure that researchers do not impute problems to students that they do not actually face at school or that we focus on students' actions to the exclusion of their thoughts and feelings about these actions. Time-on-task, for example, is currently a major area of study for schooling researchers (Stallings, 1980). Our data suggest, however, that time-off-task may be an equally important problem area for students, that is, carving some PLAY time from their daily WORK time. Moreover, they suggest that while students time-off-task actions, e.g., goofing around, may suggest that they are wasting time, their thoughts and feelings about their actions suggest that they are not wasting it at all. They are simply using time for their own agenda, rather than for the teachers' (Allen, 1982).

and 4) to develop more refined "observant participant" methodologies for using a "perspective" perspective with students. Numerous researchers have pointed out the inherent problems of using "participant observer" methodologies in classrooms and especially with students (Fine & Glassner, 1979; Smetherham, 1978). But while collaborative efforts have recently been made to resolve these problems (see, e.g., Florio & Walsh, in press) with teachers, few such efforts have been made with students (see, Alschuler, 1980; Marx & Winne, 1981, for two exceptions). We see no reason why schooling researchers cannot collaborate more closely with students to facilitate the study of school life from their perspective. Indeed, our experience suggests that with a little help, most students can become very articulate observers on their own school conditions indeed.

To return, then, to the implications of our findings for the improvement of school practices, we are struck by two aspects of these findings.

One is the rather bright picture students paint of their PLAY activities as compared to the rather bleak one they paint of their WORK ones.

Whereas, PLAY activities are characterized as being largely "autotelic," i.e., voluntary, desirable, and personally pleasurable, WORK activities are characterized as being largely "exotelic," i.e., required, resented and personally painful (see Csikszentmihalyi [1975] for more on autotelic and exotelic activities).

The other is the equally clear picture they paint regarding the dialectical nature of their PLAY and WORK. From a student perspective, as especially the categorizations of certain activities as being sometimes WORK and sometimes PLAY reveal, it would appear that PLAY and WORK are flip sides of the same coin. Hence, whether a particular activity will be categorized as being WORK and/or PLAY will depend on how students perceive it along lines pertaining to their voluntariness, desirability and pleasurableness. Clearly, if the activity is perceived as being largely voluntary, desirable, and pleasurable, then students will categorize it as being PLAY and are likely to think and feel that the activity will admit PLAY-like behaviors. And, if it is perceived as being largely involuntary, undesirable, and unpleasurable, then they will categorize it as being WORK and are likely to think and feel that the activity will admit WORK-like behaviors. It is only when the activity is perceived as having a mix of voluntariness, desirability, and pleasurableness, that students will categorize it as being sometimes WORK and sometimes PLAY and are likely to think and feel that the activity will admit both WORK- and PLAY-like behaviors as it unfolds.

We find this first set of findings to be striking because of current efforts in the field of instruction directed toward eliciting improved self-social "competence" from many more public school students (Spady, 1976; Spady & Mitchell, 1977). If one examines many of the efforts, then s/he

constantly finds ideas drawn from the adult world and especially from the adult work world at their heart. For example, one hears repeatedly of strategies that can elicit more "time-on-task" (Rosenshine, 1979, better learning "products" (Walberg, 1981), and closer linkages between the school and the "workplace" (Coleman, 1974; Tyler, 1979). And one usually finds that these strategies are constantly described (see, for example, Wise, 1979) in terms reminiscent of what over a decade ago Grannis (1967) has called the school as "factory" or "corporation" metaphors or Jackson (1967) has referred to as the "economic" perspective on teaching.

Our findings suggest that such efforts are off-target. Indeed, they suggest that every time instructional specialists help design school activities to be even more WORK-like, they are sending strong explicit and implicit messages to students not about their self-social competence but their incompetence instead. Indeed, our students, whose WORK activities have been strongly influenced by the current let's make public school work more "worklike" movement (e.g., minimum competency testing, back-to-basics), clearly perceive these activities as suggesting that they have little control over their productive destinies. The nature of these activities suggests that they are incapable of choosing the right substance or form for their WORK, it must be chosen for them; they do not know their own productive motives, they must be made to engage in WORK whether they want to or not; and they cannot set and enforce their own standards of productive excellence, they must be set for them.

If instructional specialists really want improved self-social competence from more students, then our findings suggest that they ought to turn away from the world of adult work for ideas on how to develop instructional activities and toward the world of children, adolescent, and youth

play. Indeed, our students see their PLAY activities as suggesting that they have a large measure of control over their productive destinies in terms of substance, form, motives and standards.

Some specialists in the field of curriculum, of course, have already begun to reformulate the nature of students' WORK to make it more PLAY-like. The research of Henderson (1981), Iverson (1981), Schubert and Schubert (1981), Willis, 1981, and especially King (in progress) is noteworthy. The point is that specialists in the field of instruction have not followed suit.

This brings us to our second set of findings. These findings strike us as providing some good leads about how instructional specialists could follow suit. Indeed, in defining PLAY activities as being just the reverse of WORK ones, our students have provided instructional specialists with a striking meta-social commentary (Schwartzman, 1978) on not only what is wrong with their WORK, i.e., it is exotelic, but what might be done to make it right, i.e., more autotelic. Specifically, their commentary suggests that instructional specialists design school work so that it is more PLAY-like, i.e., so that it is perceived by students as having more voluntary, more desireable, and more pleasurable attributes.

Many practical models and techniques already exist that can guide instructional specialists in the redesign of WORK activities. Indeed, we suspect that one reason that these models and techniques have been as successful as they are no doubt stems from the fact that they have made the school teaching-learning process more PLAY-like. We are speaking particularly of models and techniques drawn from the field such as humanistic education (Simpson, 1976), open education (Walberg & Thomas, 1972), experiential learning (Coleman, 1979), cooperative learning (Slavin, 1980), mastery

learning (Block, 1980), and intrinsic motivation (Deci, 1975). Humanistic and open educators, for example, have opened up new vistas about how to make activities more voluntary in terms of their substance. Specifically, they have suggested that virtually any subject students choose can be used to convey certain teacher-desired learnings. These educators, together with experiential, mastery, and cooperative learning advocates, have also stimulated new thinking about how to make classroom activities more voluntary in terms of their form. In particular, they have suggested ways of altering the conditions of time and space under which the teaching-learning process unfolds, of minimizing the process's unnecessary physical, intellectual, and emotional side-effects, and of allowing students to learn collectively. And intrinsic motivators have generated intriguing ideas about how to make classroom activities more desirable and pleasurable. They have especially suggested techniques that encourage students to want to learn and to want to learn for "endogenous" not "exogenous" reasons (Kruglanski, 1975)

There are even extant play models that can provide some over-arching conceptual templates for guiding instructional specialists to the most relevant portions of these models and techniques. After all, each of the fields we have mentioned is large and diverse, and each, as their unsavory reputation with some instructional researchers testifies, contains many <u>useless</u> as well as <u>useful</u> models and techniques.

We, for example, have been drawn for several reasons to the "flow" model of Csikszentmihalyi (1975) as our template. First, the model is viewed as one major paradigm for the study of play as context (see, e.g., Csikszentmihalyi in Cheska [1981]) and a paradigm that views play, as do we, as being defined not so much by an activity's objective form or content

but by the player's subjective stance toward it. Second, the model conceives of flow activities much in the same way that our students perceived their PLAY activities. When individuals are in dynamic state of flow they experience their activities as being "...voluntaristic, exciting, personally meaningful" (Csikszentmihalyi & Cheska, 1981, p. 22). Third, the model proposes that one can convert even the most mundane of life's activities, not to mention all kinds of serious "work" related ones, into activities that promote flow. And, fourth, the model has already been used to describe how the teaching-learning process may interrupt the flow process for students and create major and minor incidents of misbehavior (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1978), but it has not been used yet to prescribe specific resolutions to these problems.

According to the model (Csikszentmihalyi, 1978), human beings experience "flow" only when there is match between the challenges posed by the activity and the skills the human possesses to meet these challenges. If the skills are greater than the challenges, then the human will experience boredom. But if the challenges are greater than the skills, then s/he will experience anxiety. To facilitate the match between challenges and skills, the flow model contends that an activity must possess two central characteristics. First, it must provide information regarding each actor's ability to meet the set of challenges the activity poses. This implies that the activity is one with clear rules of performance, rules whose execution can be evaluated by at least the actor. Second, the activity must take place in a meaningful context, i.e., one where others' concern for performance will lend an element of reality to the activity's challenges. Out of these two basic characteristics, four more specific ones emanate. One is that the activity must be structured so that it poses a range of challenges and

different ranges of challenges. This allows the actor to increase or decrease the challenges to match his/her skills as well as to increase the complexity of information about different aspects of his/her self that can be tested. Another is that the activity have clear and unambiguous goals so that the actor can focus his/her attention. Still another is that the activity have clear criteria for its performance. The final one is that the activity provide formative feedback about one's performance that is immediate and concrete.

The issue here, therefore, is not whether instructional specialists can make students' WORK activities more PLAY-like. We already have some of the required practical models and techniques and some of the necessary guiding conceptual play templates. The issue here is whether we want to make students' WORK activities more PLAY-like.

This returns us to the opening sentence of this report and the role that certain core beliefs about students' PLAY in the operation of American public schools. We believe that instructional specialists will make students' WORK activities more PLAY-like only when we change our beliefs about students as workers and players. Erik Erickson (1963) has noted in his classic work Childhood and Society:

> "...to be tolerant of the child's play the adult must invent theories which show either that childhood play is really work--or that it does not count." (p. 187)

Instructional specialists must avoid this adult tendency in characterizing student PLAY. Our research suggest that students' PLAY is not really WORK and that it does count. Indeed, for students, there is a time for PLAY and WORK at school.

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